

Abstract 504

TITLE: Relatively High HIV Infection Rate Among Women Aged 45 and Over at HIV Testing Sites in California

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BACKGROUND/OBJECTIVES: Historically, the HIV/AIDS epidemic has disproportionately affected younger individuals at risk. Little research has examined HIV risks for older women. Therefore, it is important to investigate the risks associated with HIV infection among this population of women.

METHODS: We used data from the State of California for female clients aged 46 years and older who received an HIV test result through state-funded voluntary testing from July 1995 through June 1997 (n = 43,583). Descriptive statistical analyses were used to develop a demographic and behavioral profile of these women. Analyses were conducted separating first-time and repeat testing clients.

RESULTS: The overall HIV infection rate among older women was 1.5% (n = 638). This infection rate is three times higher than among California women. Forquera and Truax (1997) and Norman and Truax (1999) found a low HIV infection rate among California women and California women aged 13-45 (0.5%) at state-funded test sites. First-time testers HIV infection rate was slightly higher than repeat testers (1.8% vs. 1.3%). Injection drug use was by far the most highly associated with HIV infection. Among non-injection drugs, the high-risk drugs of cocaine, crack, and crank were used by very high percentages of these older women.

CONCLUSIONS: Older at-risk women who access state-funded HIV test sites are at higher risk for HIV infection than younger testing women and would benefit from greater focus and more targeted risk reduction strategies.

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